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Burford, Thomas.

Address delivered on
the 4th of July, 1846, at
Midway, Woodford coun-
ty, Ky.

1846





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1846

ADDRESS

OF

THOMAS BUFORD,

DELIVERED ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1846,

AT

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Mr. BUFORD:

We, as a Committee of the Assembly on the 4th of July, at Midway, respectfully ask the publication of your address, delivered on that occasion.

WILLIAM S. BUFORD.
GEO. H. WALLACE.
GEO. L. NUCKOLS.

ADDRESS.

FREEMEN OF AMERICA:

The history of the American Revolution is incomplete, without a knowledge of the causes which led to it. The event is, indeed, inexplicable, if we attend only to the *res gesta* itself. It was the growth of more than a century of struggle and conquest, in the cause of civil and religious liberty. At the very period when Priest-craft and King-craft had engulphed the European continent, Providence seems to have beneficently opened this western world, as an ark of safety to expiring freedom.

The despotic combination of the Church in the old world, had too securely fastened their fetters upon the minds and consciences of men, ever to have been destroyed by an internal revolution. European society had, by ages of feudal and ecclesiastical discipline, lost all form of self regeneration. The experiment of a government upon the principles of liberty had to be practically made upon a soil and amidst circumstances entirely different from those that then existed, when conjoints of theories and customs in Church and State, to which every State and Nation of society had contributed a part, presented an insuperable barrier to a simple, original and improved experiment, upon the Heaven-descended basis.

The Revolution of the old world must come from the new. The thrones and hierarchs of Europe knew this, and watched, with jealous and hostile eye, each movement of the young giants of America.

It was a fortunate occurrence, that in the persecution which peopled our shores, religious and political rights were alike con-

cerned; and, above all, no band of philosophers brought in their pandecks and codes; no jesuit society its ecclesiastical machinery, to be turned in the open field of the new world.

The Bible was the Constitution for State and Church—their sheet-anchor—and, with such a basis, though the details of policy may, might, and must, from human imperfection, be sometimes wrong, the cardinal point of human right could not fail to be secured.

New England's rugged soil received the stern and rigid morality and enthusiastic devotion of the Puritans. France lost the sterly virtue of her realms, when her mad policy drove to Carolina the remnants of the unyielding Huguenots, enriching America with recruits for the army of her revolution.

The civil distribution of the Catalicts, released upon the shores of Maryland, the section of a persecuted Church, were the first to proclaim religious toleration. The simple, frugal, form-despising Quaker, found, amidst the forest of Pennsylvania, the quiet repose and solemn state of society for which he longed. Witnesses of truth and liberty flocked [from the coasts of the world to this Canaan of hope, where they could proclaim their testimonies aloud and free, and planted the seeds whose fruits we this day, and in part the whole earth, are receiving the benefits of.

Could the treasures of America have been told to the ears of Europe, by the foretelling tongue of a Joseph, her cities would have been rolled upon the ocean waves, her graneries would have been shipped, her arts and sciences exported to the shores of the new world, unpeopling her own soil to settle and seed this asparagus-bed of the world.

Could England have thought that the puritans, exiled to the mountainous lands of the New England States, would ever be the feeders of her starving plebeans? Could France have believed, when she drove the Huguenots from her possessions, they would be the cause of clothing her vulgus, covering her degenerate children from the scorching sunbeams, and sheltering her inhabitants from the cold and chilly winds, by their cottons? Could the Provinces, States and Principalities of all Europe have believed their off-scouring would be the foundation of a government equally rivaling and finally excelling their own? No.

Little did Europe think that America would have her merchant ships splitting the billows and waves of the ocean, pouring her in-

valuable commerce into the ports of every nation, and spreading her improvements in science, arts and literature, and her inventions, to the study of the world, and particularly to the European mind.

It was not the property-destroying taxation alone that induced the early settlers of America to throw off [the slave making yoke of Great Britain; for the Colonies of America were able to pay even the exorbitant tax demanded of them by their respective Governments. It was the cause of truth and liberty—of the right of religious worship, in whatever manner it suited the believer—and a representation in the halls of legislation, that induced our forefathers to commence the revolution.

It appears as if Providence directed the peopling of this continent. Its settlers were the imitators of no one—the followers of no particular sect. It seems when the foot was placed upon the soil, the breath was purified, the wild forest engrafted a new nature and spirit—a spirit not checked by the wildness of the untrodden place, not excited by the war-cry of the savage and wild whistle of the panther, but ever ready to meet, coolly and calmly, the dangers and vicissitudes that were incidental to the early settlers. They grew slow and steady, like the followers of Zien, strengthening themselves by the purity of their principles, engrafting equal hope to the interests of all individuals, and finally developing themselves in a colonial responsibility.

The retrospect of eighty one years, introduces the American freemen in the theatre of '65, erected in New York by the persecuted spirit of religious and civil right, where the first spark of liberty's spreading sun gleamed through the bows of a monarchical yoke, upon the thresholds of civil liberty. It was there the first spark of freedom exhibited itself to the continental colonies of America, not unlike the spark of Bethlehem, increasing its flames upon the very fabric of Kingly power, and using the sworn faith of Kingly subjects, as fuel, melting and moulding the hearts of royalty to the truth and purity of the sacrifice.

From thence the vision is invited to rest upon the assembly of '74, when the plan of liberty's temple was marked out, and the first block of freedom's mansion laid. That assembly invited the mighty monster from his despotic throne and gigantic palace, to the platform of nature's right. O! pledge that bound the hearts of

America together by a link the most sacred of all ties—the ties of honor and country—may you never be violated!

Again, in '75, a similar association of the colonies assembled in Philadelphia, which assembly declared that they would no longer live under the galling laws of Parliament, and the costume of British allegiance was to be thrown off and never again worn by the true American. Continental Congress, charged with the judicial authority of their constituents, made a public declaration of the causes and necessity of taking up arms, and proceeded immediately to levy and organize an army—to prescribe rules for the government of their naval and land forces—to contract debts and emit a paper currency upon the faith of the Union—and, gradually assuming all the rights of sovereignty, they at last, on the 4th day of July, 1776, took a separate and equal station among the nations of the earth, by declaring the United Colonies to be free and independent. This day 70 years ago, the flag the motto of which was *man is capable of self-government*, waived its blazoning face over the plains and forests of America—raised itself in the centre of the Union, and, upheld by the standard of patriotism, was a balm to the soul of the wounded, and a bright star to the despairing seldier, when an occasional defeat would throw its smothering veil over his spirits. This flag stood, like the brazen serpent, amidst the army of America; the soldier, worn out with seven years' labors, was refreshed and cured by its gentle wave; one single glance would urge the fainted heart to sacrifice liberty's blood upon the altar of religious privileges.

The memorable declaration of the 4th recapitulated the oppression of the British Kings, and declared that State privileges and individual rights were stamped upon the heart of nature, and Providence would not and ~~could~~ not allow her most sacred law to be violated by the poisoned edicts of the European Governments.

The English despots were not satisfied by poisoning the veins of all Europe, but wished to keep in subjection the heart of America, by the embittered yoke which had been laid upon the necks of Christendom.

The privilege spirit of Christianity burst forth from the bosom of America's forest, broke the chains that girded her shrine, and raised her spotless mantle of piety against the war-flag of Great Britain. Great and mighty Providence, what dangers threatened this elysian field—this virgin soil of creation.

When the decrees of the 4th of July, '76, reached the shores of Europe, the Queen of the ocean set sail to the ports of America, to immolate the fathers of freedom upon the altar of rebellion. What solacing hope could now be left to the United Colonies?—What chance of victory was left them? They would have almost been willing to withdraw the decree of the 4th, but, like German Protestants, they march to the battle field, willing to sacrifice their all, for the sake of truth and liberty. Protected by the shield of faith, they won an inheritance for the present and future generations, which will forever outweigh the jewels, wealth, power and principality of kingly possessions.

What heart does not beat and pulsate in unison with the emotions of that assembly?—What eye does not let fall the tear of sorrowing sympathy for the misfortunes, troubles and vexations, of the revolutionary soldiers, who labored not so much for their good of their country as for its future glory, greatness and magnificence, the enjoyment of which their offspring were to realize.

From the theatres of '65, '74, and '75, your attention is invited to the parlour of the West—where the war-cry of the savage is no longer heard, the traces of his wigwam blotted out by the plough-share. Where once the wild deer leaped from rock to rock, shunning the claws of the ravenous wolf, the merino lamb gambols in perfect ease and security, budding, at his pleasure, the spice bush! The Binkshire pig sleeps soundly upon the bear's bed! The woods that were once thrilled with the preying cry of the eagle, are harmonized by the melodies of the thrush. The myriads of cloud-reaching poplars—evidences of the strength of the soil—are seldom to be seen. In their stead, vegetable matter, for the nourishment of man, is cultivated.

Oh! my country, whose soil is ploughed by the sun-beams—in whose realms paradise is revised—may the blood that fell from liberty's veins be ever pure and holy in thy sepulchre—never permit the blood of aspiring chieftains to flow into that virgin sanctuary!—never allow the aspiring grasp of a tyrant to break the golden chain that girds thy individual States!—never allow it to tear asunder thy Constitution, the only security to thy present and future greatness!

The eye of the historian had wandered from age to age, from continent to continent, from nation to nation, in search for thirst of blood satisfied, but it would have ever wandered, had it not fell

upon the tomb of Washington. Now, whilst the storms and dangers of war are threatening that sepulchre, there is still protection, since in the archives of America are securely placed the policy and codes of CLAY—a man who travelled the dark, dismal, and uncertain path of a political life, but, like a Moses, was not allowed to put his feet upon the promised land!

THOMAS BUFORD.



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